

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8468
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 10944

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT KS
SUBJ: REVIEW OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION, 1977

REF: A. SEOUL 9367 (DTG 040906Z NOV 77) (NOTAL)
B. SEOUL 10403 (DTG 090920Z DEC 77)
C. SEOUL 10099 (DTG 010257Z DEC 77)

SUMMARY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONCLUDED ITS LATEST SESSION ON DECEMBER 17, PASSING A WELTER OF BILLS AT THE LAST MINUTE, BUT ACCEPTING FEW OF NDP'S SUGGESTIONS. NDP DID SCORE SOME POINTS IN INTERPELLATIONS, HOWEVER. IN VIEW OF RATHER POOR SHOWING BY NDP, CHAIRMAN YI MAY SOON FACE STRONG CHALLENGES FROM WITHIN HIS PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE KOREAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLETED ITS 98TH REGULAR SESSION ON DECEMBER 17, PASSING SOME 102 BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS DURING ITS 89-DAY TERM. THE SESSION WAS NOTABLE FOR THE GENERALLY COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE WHICH THE OPPOSITION NDP DISPLAYED TOWARD THE RULING CAMP. UNDER NDP CHAIRMAN YI CH'OL-SUNG'S SLOGAN OF "RENOVATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION",
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THE OPPOSITION ESCHEWED ANY DIRECT ATTACKS ON THE YUSIN SYSTEM ITSELF AND TRIED TO BUILD ITS IMAGE AS A CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION PARTY. THE RESULT WAS MIXED, WITH NDP GAINING SOME GOVERNMENT CONCESSIONS, AND PRESSING GOVERNMENT HARD ON CURRENT ISSUES SUCH AS PAK TONG-SON CASE AND SCANDALS, BUT SUCCEEDING IN PASSING NONE OF ITS POLITICAL INITIATIVES.

2. THE ASSEMBLY'S BIGGEST SINGLE ACCOMPLISHMENT, PASSING THE 3.52 TRILLION WON BUDGET FOR 1978, WAS NEVER IN DOUBT. THE NDP SUCCEEDED IN TRIMMING THE TOTAL ONLY BY A MINUSCULE 33 BILLION WON (JUST LESS THAN ONE PERCENT, AND MUCH LESS THAN THE GOAL OF 7.3 PERCENT CHAIRMAN YI HAD ANNOUNCED BEFORE THE SESSION) BEFORE JOINING THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES IN PASSING THE BUDGET BILL UNANIMOUSLY. THE NDP CAN CLAIM SOME CREDIT FOR MINOR REDUCTIONS IN INCOME TAX.

3. OF THE EIGHTY-ODD BILLS PASSED IN THE LAST FOUR DAYS OF THE SESSION, THE FOLLOWING WERE MOST IMPORTANT:
(A) AMENDMENT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LAW. NDP WALKED OUT, TO PROTEST REJECTION OF ITS PROPOSALS TO INCREASE NUMBER AND DURATION OF ASSEMBLY SESSIONS AND TO ALLOW ONLY ONE-FOURTH OF MEMBERSHIP TO CALL A SPECIAL SESSION. AS A RESULT, RULING CAMP'S BILL--PROVIDING FOR ONLY SUCH MINOR MATTERS AS ELECTRONIC VOTING MECHANISM IN ASSEMBLY AND SHORTENING OF PRIOR PUBLIC NOTICE OF ASSEMBLY SESSIONS FROM ONE WEEK TO THREE DAYS--WAS ADOPTED.
(B) BILL FOR SPECIAL MEASURES FOR CONFISCATION OF PROPERTY OF THOSE WHO COMMIT ANTI-NATIONAL ACTS, ENABLING ROKG TO TRY IN ABSTENTIA THOSE (LIKE KIM HYONG-UK) WHO DAMAGE THE NATION BY OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES, AND TO SEIZE ANY PROPERTY THEY POSSESS IN KOREA. (NDP WALKED OUT IN
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OPPOSITION). (C) AN AMENDMENT TO THE FAMILY LAW, DESIGNATING 1978 AS A SPECIAL PERIOD DURING WHICH COUPLES HAVING THE SAME FAMILY NAME AND FAMILY ORIGIN (WHOSE MARRIAGES ARE PROHIBITED BY CURRENT LAW) MAY REGISTER THEIR MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN. NDP VOTED AGAINST PASSAGE, HOLDING OUT FOR PERMANENT LEGAL RECOGNITION OF SUCH MARRIAGES: THIS BILL IS UNDERSTANDABLY POPULAR WITH THE 200,000 PEOPLE AFFECTED, WHO WILL GAIN LEGAL STATUS.
(D) AMENDMENT TO EXIT AND ENTRY CONTROL LAW TO BAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY BY FOREIGNERS (REFTEL B). (NDP VOTED AGAINST.) (E) AMENDMENT TO LAW GOVERNING ELECTION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN (REFTEL C), PROVIDING FOR CREATION OF FOUR NEW ELECTION DISTRICTS--THREE IN SEOUL (TOBONG-GU, KANGNAM-GU, AND KANGSO-GU) AND ONE IN PUSAN (NAM-GU); FOR THE APPOINTMENT BY POLITICAL PARTIES OF POLL WATCHERS AND OBSERVERS AT BALLOT-COUNTING SITES; AND FOR INCREASE OF DEPOSIT FOR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES ONLY FROM THREE MILLION WON TO FIVE MILLION WON. (BILL PASSED WITH ONLY INDEPENDENTS OPPOSING IT.) (F) LAW ON TERRITORIAL SEA WHICH, AS OF APRIL 1, 1978, WILL ESTABLISH A 12-MILE LIMIT FOR THE TERRITORIAL SEA, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE KOREA STRAIT, WHERE THE FORMER 3-MILE LIMIT WILL STILL

BE USED. (SEOUL 10492 AND PREVIOUS). WHEN OFFICIAL COPY AVAILABLE A TRANSLATION WILL BE FORWARDED BY TELEGRAM. (G) AN AMENDMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION LAW WHICH PROVIDES FOR A NEW MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND RESOURCES, TO BEGIN OPERATIONS WITH THE NEW YEAR, AND FOR TWO ADDITIONAL ASSISTANT VICE MINISTERS, IN THE MINISTRIES OF HOME AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE. TEXTS OF ABOVE BILLS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE, BUT WILL BE PUBLISHED IN ROKG OFFICIAL GAZETTE IN EARLY JANUARY. EMBASSY WILL REVIEW THEM AND REPORT SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS.

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4. THE NDP FAILED IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO PASS ITS MORE POLITICAL PROPOSALS. ITS BILL TO CREATE A BI-PARTISAN CONSTITUTIONAL DELIBERATION COMMITTEE WAS KILLED BY A VOTE ALONG PARTY LINES IN THE ASSEMBLY'S STEERING COMMITTEE. ITS PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE SELECTION OF DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR UNIFICATION (NCU) SO THAT CANDIDATES COULD PLEDGE THEMSELVES IN ADVANCE TO SPECIFIED PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES (THUS IN EFFECT DECIDING THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AT THE TIME OF THE NCU DELEGATE ELECTIONS) WAS NEVER FORMALLY ADVANCED AT ALL. SEVERAL OTHER NDP PROPOSALS WERE NEVER FOLLOWED UP, AND ARE THUS TECHNICALLY LEFT PENDING (ALONG WITH A LARGE BODY OF PROPOSALS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS)--AMONG THEM A PROPOSAL FOR A JOINT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE PAK TONG-SON CASE, AND A BILL TO REVISE LAWS GOVERNING MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS, BOTH ADVOCATED BY CHAIRMAN YI BEFORE ASSEMBLY SESSION BEGAN.

5. ALTHOUGH, IN WORDS OF TONGA ILBO EDITORIAL, IT WAS
A "BAD YEAR" FOR POLITICAL BILLS, NDP CAN CLAIM SOME
ACHIEVEMENTS IN THIS SESSION. NDP PRESSED GOVERNMENT
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HARD IN INTERPELLATIONS ON ACTIVITIES OF PAK TONG-SON
AND KIM HAN-JO; NDP ASSEMBLYMAN O SE-UNG RAISED ISSUE OF
CENSORING OF ASSEMBLY MINUTES, EXTRACTING APOLOGIES FROM
FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND THE SPEAKER, AS
WELL AS PLEDGES THAT IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN AGAIN; AND NDP
PRESSED ROKG HARD ON ISSUES OF CORRUPTION AND SCANDALS.

6. COMMENT: ALL TOLD, THIS SESSION WAS QUIETER AND MORE
SMOOTHLY MANAGED THAN OTHER RECENT SESSIONS. THE PERFOR-
MANCE OF THE NDP BECAME A MATTER OF SOME CONTROVERSY
WITHIN THE PARTY HOWEVER, WITH MANY NDP LEADERS PRESSING
FOR A MORE STRIDENT OPPOSITION POSTURE. WITH SOME OF
FACTIONS OPPOSED TO YI ALREADY MANEUVERING TO HOLD A
PARTY CONVENTION NEXT YEAR, WE BELIEVE CHAIRMAN YI WILL
HAVE TO HOP TO RETAIN HIS POSITION. IN THIS CONNECTION
YI ON DECEMBER 27 TOLD REPORTERS THAT HE HOPED FOR A
SECOND MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PAK.

7. THE NDP'S PROBLEMS HAVE NOT HOWEVER MEANT A CONCOMITANT
BENEFIT TO THE DRP, WHICH HAS ALSO CONTINUED A FAIRLY
PASSIVE ROLE, REFLECTING THE SUBORDINATE POSITION OF THE
ASSEMBLY IN KOREAN POLITICS. NONETHELESS, KOREANS HAVE
WELCOMED THE ENHANCED LEVEL OF SUBSTANTIVE DEBATE IN
THE ASSEMBLY ON ISSUES OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE. WHILE
PRESS REPORTING OF THE DIALOGUE HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO A
NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DIRECTED TABOOS, THE ASSEMBLY'S
ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIMITING THE
ABILITY OF THE AUTHORITIES TO RESTRICT PUBLIC DISCUSSION
OF SENSITIVE ISSUES.

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